

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01
COME-00 EPG-02 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07 INT-05
L-03 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 OES-07 SP-02 SS-15
STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /094 W
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O R 201332Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9482

INFO DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANTANANARIVO 1326

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: EWWT, EMIN, ENRG, MA, RO

SUBJECT: WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL OIL SURVEY OFF MADAGASCAR'S WEST
COAST

REFS: A) ANTANANARIVO 1058, B) NOSIC SUITLAND MD 081651Z JUN 77,
C) STATE 133795, D) ANTANANARIVO 1228

1. SUMMARY. MADAGASCAR GOVERNMENT IS UNHAPPY WITH WESTERN
GEOPHYSICAL'S PERFORMANCE AND MAY TAKE DRASTIC ACTION. END
SUMMARY.

2. WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL'S TEAM LEADER, BARRY MACDONALD, VISITED
EMBASSY JULY 19 AND CONFIRMED EARLIER THIRD-HAND INFORMATION
THAT GOVERNMENT AGENCY OMNIS (NATIONAL MILITARY OFFICE FOR
STRATEGIC INDUSTRIES) IS BECOMING VERY UNHAPPY WITH DELAYS
IN WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY OPERATION. ACCORDING TO
MACDONALD, WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL HAS ENCOUNTERED VARIOUS
PROBLEMS (CABLE HAS SNAGGED ON CORAL AND BEEN PEVERED BY
SHARKS, ETC.) WHICH HAVE SERIOUSLY DELAYED ITS OPERATIONS.
ITS CONTRACT WITH OMNIS PROVIDES FOR A FIXED PRICE FOR 20
DAYS OF WORK, REGARDLESS OF RESULTS, AND THE 20 DAYS
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ELAPSED JULY 16 WITH ONLY SMALL AREA ACTUALLY SURVEYED.
MACDONALD HAS DIRECTED CREW TO CONTINUE SURVEY, PENDING
FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS IN HOUSTON.
THIRD-HAND INFORMANT CITED ABOVE BELIEVES THAT OMNIS MAY
TAKE DRASTIC ACTION IN RESPONSE TO WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO
BE BAD FAITH ON PART OF WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL.

3. MACDONALD CONFIRMS THAT ROMANIAN SEISMIC ENGINEER POPESCU (SEE REF D) IS ON BOARD WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL III AS OMNIS OBSERVER. MACDONALD BELIEVES THAT IS POPESCU REPORTS ACCURATELY TO OMNIS, OMNIS WILL REALIZE THAT WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL CREW HAS GIVEN BEST POSSIBLE PERFORMANCE BUT HAS BEEN VICTIM OF SEVERAL UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENTS.

4. COMMENT. EMBASSY ASSUMES THAT WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL'S CONTRACT WITH OMNIS IS PROVING EMBARRASSMENT TO WHICHEVER OMNIS OFFICIALS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT, AND THAT NOW THESE OFFICIALS ARE PROBABLY DESPERATELY TRYING TO EXONERATE THEMSELVES IN EYES OF THEIR SUPERIORS. SHOULD WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW ONLY THE LETTER OF THE CONTRACT, AND NOT CONTINUE SURVEY WORK, POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE COULD CONCEIVABLY RANGE FROM A SIMPLE REFUSAL TO PAY, THROUGH IMPOUNDING THE VESSEL, TO THE EXTREME OF ARRESTING OR PREVENTING DEPARTURE OF SOME GEOPHYSICAL PERSONNEL. WHILE WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE THIS FINAL EXTREME STEP, WE NONETHELESS WISH TO ALERT WASHINGTON TO THIS REMOTE POSSIBILITY. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT THE DECISIONS TO CONTRACT WITH AN AMERICAN FIRM FOR THIS SENSITIVE WORK WAS PROBABLY A DIFFICULT AND EVEN DARING DECISION FOR OMNIS, AND THAT THE LACK OF RESULTS IN RETURN FOR OVER \$300,000 HAS PROBABLY PUT AT LEAST ONE OMNIS OFFICIAL VERY MUCH ON THE SPOT.
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5. ACTION REQUESTED: IF DEPARTMENT CONCURS, SUGGEST DEPARTMENT CONTACT WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL IN HOUSTON (PREFERABLY CHESTER SMITH WHO NEGOTIATED CONTRACT) AND EXPLAIN EMBARRASSING POSITION IN WHICH OMNIS FINDS ITSELF. IF OTHER COMMERCIAL AND LOGISTICAL CONSIBI PERMIT, WE BELIEVE WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL'S BEST COURSE NOW IS TO FOLLOW SUGGESTIONS OF THEIR ON-SITE TEAM LEADER, MCDONALD, WHO APPEARS TO BE QUITE LEVEL-HEADED AND SHOULD BE IN BEST POSITION TO GAUGE WHETHER OMNIS CONVINCED THAT WESTERN GEOPHYSICAL HAS DEALT HONESTLY WITH THE MADAGASCAR GOVERNMENT.BARRETT

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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